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# **Quality of Life in the U.S. Marine Corps**

## **Executive Summary**

Elyse W. Kerce

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## **Quality of Life in the U.S. Marine Corps**

Elyse W. Kerce

Reviewed by  
Joyce Shettel Dutcher

Approved and released by  
Kathleen E. Moreno, Director  
Personnel and Organizational Assessment Department

Navy Personnel Research and Development Center  
San Diego, California 92152-7250

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## **Foreword**

This work was funded by the Marine Corps Systems Command (Code AWT) under Program Element 0602131M, Project CP31P14, Task 1. This Executive Summary is intended to provide a brief overview of factors that have an effect on quality of life in the Marine Corps. Details of the research are contained in NPRDC-TR-95-4, Quality of Life in the U.S. Marine Corps (Kerce, 1995).

**KATHLEEN E. MORENO**  
Director, Personnel and Organizational  
Assessment Department

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# Introduction

## Problem

Social realities today are such that the all-volunteer military must compete for a declining population of young Americans whose expectations and aspirations are rising. At the same time, technological advances impose increased performance demands. Attending to quality of life issues is one way that the military services hope to assure that a qualified, motivated force is available. To that end, billions of dollars have been spent on programs intended to enhance the quality of life (QOL) for service members and their families. The comprehensive Marine Corps quality of life assessment was intended to determine the success of those efforts, provide guidance to program managers, and serve as a baseline against which future innovations can be judged.

## Objective

This *Research Summary* provides a synopsis of the major findings from the 1993 USMC QOL assessment, and describes the causal relationships among life domains, global QOL, and behavioral outcomes of interest to the Marine Corps. A more detailed report is available and may be obtained from Navy Personnel Research and Development Center (Kerce, 1995).

## Background

A search of the QOL literature revealed that there have been virtually no empirical studies investigating the impact of subjective life quality on behaviors. Because this society views positive life quality as a desirable outcome in and of itself, its related outcomes are seldom analyzed. We seek to improve quality of life because we intuitively believe that people who are content and happy with the circumstances of their lives will be more stable and better citizens. Similarly, the Marine Corps provides QOL programs in an effort to improve QOL for

its members because it is the right thing to do. Additionally, however, Marine Corps QOL is believed to affect the recruitment, performance, and retention of qualified personnel.

*Quality of life (QOL)* is a new name for an old idea. After the introduction of the phrase in the 1960s, it quickly became part of the vocabulary of government leaders, social scientists, advertisers, and the man in the street. When we hear someone speak about improving QOL or read about QOL initiatives, most of us feel that we understand what is meant by the term. Nevertheless, we might be hard-pressed to come up with a definition as there continues to be a great deal of ambiguity concerning what quality of life is and how to achieve it.

## What is Quality of Life?

It seems that most people use the word "quality" to denote a degree of excellence or good. In this common usage, quality of life therefore equates to "a good life." The problem arises in specifying the characteristics of a good life and arriving at standards that are universally accepted. Dalke and Rourke (1971) said that quality of life is "a person's sense of well-being, his satisfaction or dissatisfaction with life, or his happiness or unhappiness." Similarly, the definition proposed by Rice (1984) states that quality of life "is the degree to which the experience of an individual's life satisfies that individual's wants and needs (both physical and psychological)."

With these definitions the assessment of quality of life moves beyond the traditional social indicator approach, which deals only with objective facts and conditions of social life without regard to people's subjective perceptions. While such indicators continue

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*The views expressed are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Marine Corps or Navy Personnel Research and Development Center.*



to be invaluable for economic planning, it is the interaction of objective conditions and subjective perceptions that ultimately determines quality of life as experienced by individuals.

### **How Should QOL Be Assessed?**

Generally, researchers now acknowledge that the information provided by subjective and objective indicators is complementary, and that only when both types of measures are concurrently collected will it be possible to know how changes in living conditions affect people's sense of life quality. The Marine Corps QOL assessment described in this summary draws heavily on subjective data and, consistent with current research approaches, also includes objective measures.

When people are asked to describe their lives, they can respond either in terms of their global experience or with specific reference to the *domains* of life in which their experience is segmented. Global life measures are concerned with the assessment of life as a whole, and are generally understood to reflect a composite of satisfactions with specific domains of life, plus some portion of affect outside that represented by the domains.

Learning how the various domains contribute to global quality of life has both theoretical and practical implications for Marine Corps leaders. Each individual combines domain satisfactions in a personal way, and demographic (e.g., married vs. unmarried; younger vs. older) variations in combining patterns are common. Domain measures are particularly useful because, in describing specific areas of life, they provide information that is not captured by global assessments (Cheng, 1988). Research efforts have concentrated on domains that are shared by the general population and are inclusive enough to tap most areas of experience. Eleven domains that met these criteria provided a

framework for the Marine Corps QOL assessment. Domains examined were:

- Residence
- Neighborhood
- Leisure and Recreation
- Health
- Friends and Friendships
- Marriage/Intimate Relationship
- Relations with One's Children
- Relations with Other Relatives
- Income and Standard of Living
- Job
- Self

## **Approach**

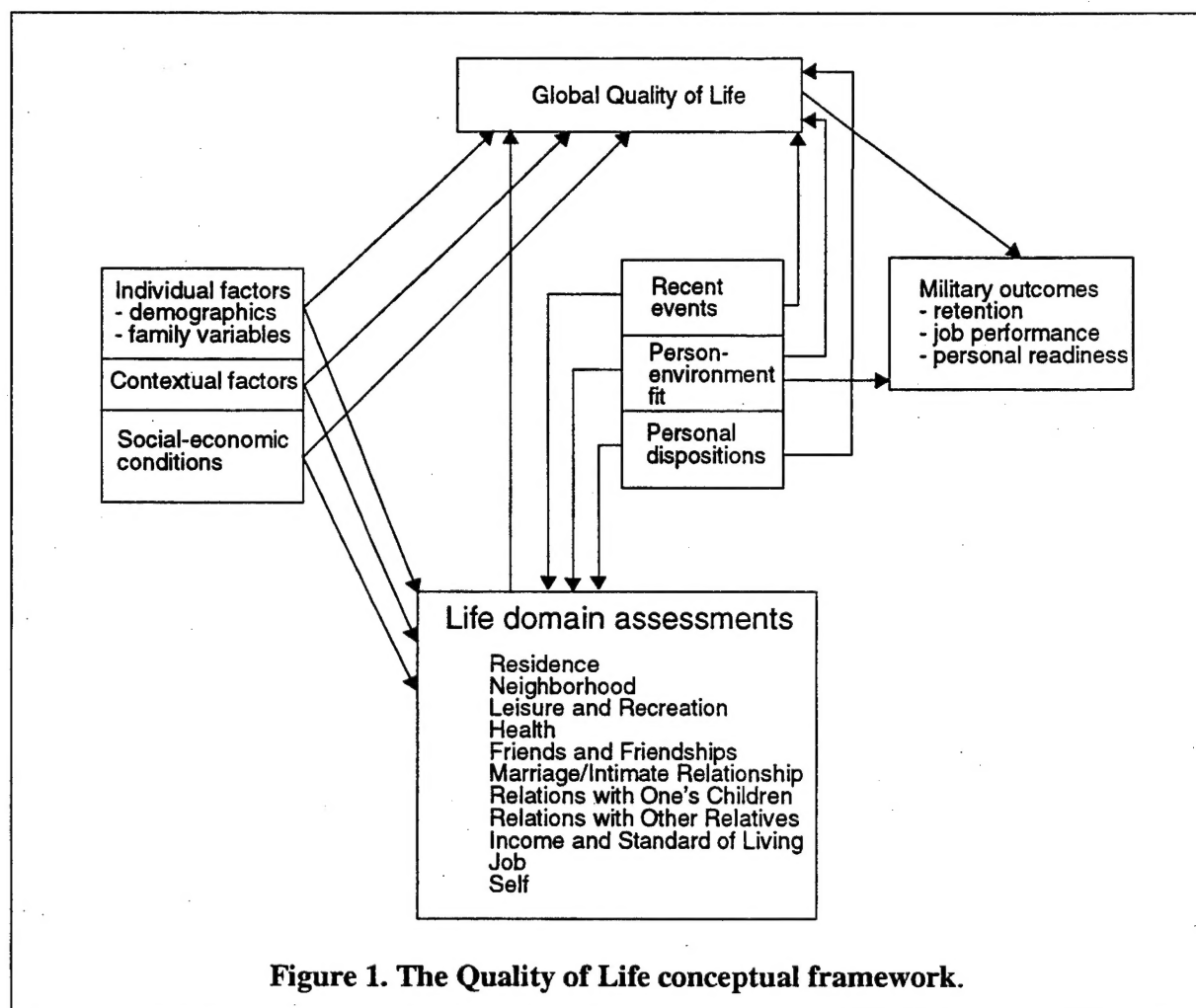
This investigation sought to expand an understanding of QOL by examining not only the factors that are associated with quality of life, but also how quality of life as perceived by its members affects the Marine Corps' ability to accomplish its mission. The relationships among these factors were hypothesized to be modified by certain contextual variables as well as demographic and personality differences.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Beginning with the conceptual framework shown in Figure 1, a general model of the hypothesized relationships among a subset of the variables was developed. The principal hypotheses underlying the model were: Global QOL, or assessments of life as a whole, would be a function of domain evaluations plus individual factors and contextual factors; and global QOL would in turn be related to the organizational outcomes of reenlistment intentions, performance, and personal readiness.

### **Structural Equation Models**

Unlike the natural sciences, the social and behavioral sciences seldom allow for rigorous experimentation under controlled conditions.



As a result, causal inferences must be based on statistical evaluation of models and hypotheses. Most social science theories and models are formulated in terms of theoretical constructs that are not directly measurable or observable. Instead, a number of *indicators* of such concepts are used to study the theoretical variables. Structural equation models (SEM) are appropriately used to specify the phenomenon under study in terms of cause-and-effect variables and their indicators when (a) the observed variables contain measurement errors, (b) the interesting relationship is among the true variables, and (c) there is interdependence of simultaneous causation among the variables. To fully understand the relationships among domains as well as their combined effects on global QOL--and ultimately organizational out-

comes--it is necessary to consider all the relevant factors and their interrelationships simultaneously.

The use of structural equation models requires statistical tools that go well beyond conventional regression analysis and analysis of variance. Several software packages are now available for developing and testing structural equation models, the best known of which is the LISREL software<sup>1</sup> used here to examine the relationships among domain QOL and global life quality. The LISREL method estimates the coefficients in a set of linear structural equa-

<sup>1</sup>The software used for structural equation modeling, LISREL8 and PRELIS2, was published by Scientific Software International.

tions. Variables may be either directly observed variables or unmeasured, "latent" variables. The model assumes that there is a causal structure among the latent variables, and that the measured variables are adequate indicators of the latent variables. In its most general form the LISREL model consists of two parts: a measurement model and a structural equation model. The measurement model describes the measurement properties of the observed variables. The structural equation model specifies the causal relationships among the latent variables, and describes the causal effects and the amount of unexplained variance.

### Questionnaire Development

Subjective data were collected from selected participants by means of a questionnaire entitled *The Marine Corps and Quality of Life: 1993 Member Questionnaire*. The questionnaire was presented in a machine-scannable format, with sections devoted to each of the life domains and to measures of life as a whole. Multiple measures of global QOL were used, including both single-item measures and multiple item scales. Each of these was adapted from items found in published research for which validity and reliability had been previously established.

Domain sections included both summary items and detailed descriptions. This strategy facilitated tests of the models while providing information about *why* and under what conditions members express positive feelings about an area of life.

Other factors measured in the questionnaire included the personality variables of optimism, activity level, and sociability; and the military outcome variables of intentions to reenlist and personal readiness. Intention to reenlist was used as an indicator of the outcome variable retention. Personal readiness was a composite measure consisting of seven components, the

majority of which were multi-item scales. Another multi-item scale assessed commitment to the Marine Corps.

### Objective Measures

Objective measures included contextual factors, social-economic conditions, and performance data. These variables tended to be somewhat constrained by the characteristics of extant data bases that have evolved over a number of years to meet other objectives. As a result, the data were not always adequate for research purposes. In an effort to overcome inadequacies in these data, multiple indicators were used whenever possible.

Still other objective data (in the sense that it was factual and verifiable as opposed to the reflection of opinion or feelings) were collected from sample participants by means of the questionnaire developed for this research. Measures of this kind included such things as demographic variables.

### Sample Selection

A representative sample of the active duty Marine Corps was randomly selected for participation in the study. The sample was stratified by location and paygrade, with E-1 personnel excluded. A five percent sample was drawn from the three most populous MC Bases at Camp LeJeune, Camp Pendleton, and Okinawa. A ten percent sample was drawn from all other groups. Marines stationed at remote locations or at locations with relatively small populations were grouped together by function for sampling purposes. Examples of these functional groups included security forces, recruiters, student companies, etc. Each of these groups was then sampled at the 10 percent rate.

## Questionnaire Administration

The QOL questionnaire was administered on-site to Marine participants at large installations, and by mail to participants at remote or relatively small installations. When the random selection of individuals had been made in accordance with the sampling plan, a participant list was prepared for each location or function group, listing participants by social security number, name, paygrade, and marital status. These individuals came to centralized locations for group administration of the questionnaire. Provisions were made for substitutions for selected participants who were deployed or absent.

There were several reasons for the decision to administer the questionnaire on-site. Perhaps the most significant reason was a desire to increase response rate and thus assure that the obtained sample would accurately represent all Marine Corps personnel. (Currently, the average response rate obtained for questionnaires distributed by mail to military personnel is in the area of 33-40 percent). The second consideration was the nature of the questionnaire, which was more personal than the usual survey instrument. On-site administration gave the researchers the opportunity to fully explain the rationale for certain items, as well as to assure respondents of the confidentiality of their responses.

## Results

A total of 10,332 active duty Marines completed the 1993 QOL Questionnaire, about six percent of the Marine Corps. This represents a response rate of 83 percent of the specified sample at sites where on-site questionnaire administration was conducted, and a response rate of 38 percent of the mailed questionnaires.

## Characteristics of Respondents

A central concern of this research was to achieve a sample that was representative in terms of demographics so that results could be generalized to the total Marine Corps population. Although random selection should assure that the *selected* sample is representative, any systematic variation in response rate by one or more demographic groups could have diminished the representativeness of the resulting *respondent* sample.

Tables 1 and 2 indicate the close correspondence between the sample and the total Marine Corps when distributions of paygrade, age, gender and race were compared. As indicated by the percentages shown, the sample distributions are close to those of the total population. The sample does have a slight discrepancy in terms of race/ethnic distribution, with a somewhat larger percentage of Hispanic members and a slightly smaller percentage of black members.

**Marital-Parental Status.** The sample was a reasonable approximation of the proportion of married to single Marines. Marital-status statistics for the Marine Corps show the percentage of Marines who are married to be 48.2 percent, as compared to 50.9 percent of sample respondents who said that they were married.

Thirty-three percent of the total sample reported that they had dependent children living with them. Of these 3,402 Marines who had dependent children living with them, 180 were single parents. Just over 2 percent of the sample had both dependent children living with them and dependent children living elsewhere. An additional 733 individuals in the sample said

that they had dependent children who did not live with them.

**Table 1**

**Paygrade Distributions of Marine Corps and Sample**

Paygrade	Marine Corps <sup>a</sup> (%)	QOL Sample (%)
E-2--E-3	40	38
E-4--E-5	30	33
E-6--E-7	13	15
E-8--E-9	3	3
O-1--O-3	6	6
O-4--O-9	3	4
WO	1	1

<sup>a</sup>See Manpower Statistics for Manpower Managers, April 1992, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps (MA).

**Table 2**

**Demographic Distributions of Marine Corps and Sample**

	Marine Corps <sup>a</sup> (%)	QOL Sample (%)
Gender		
Male	95.5	93.7
Female	4.5	6.3
Race/Ethnicity		
White	71.6	70.0
Black	18.1	15.7
Hispanic	7.2	10.6
Other	3.1	3.7
Age		
17-20	22.4	19.3
21-25	39.9	39.3
26-30	16.9	17.3
31-35	10.9	12.3
36-40	6.4	7.9
41-45	2.7	2.9
46 and above	0.7	1.0

<sup>a</sup>Manpower Statistics for Manpower Managers, April 1992, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps (MA).

## Models for Demographic Groups

Prior research suggested that the way domain evaluations are combined to arrive at evaluations of life as a whole would be related to demographic variables. With this in mind, it was critical to examine how the relationships among QOL factors varied among groups. The sample was accordingly divided on the basis of family structure to yield the following groups: married members with children, married members without children, single members without children, and single parents. Two approaches for conducting analyses of this type were considered. The first option, simultaneous analysis, requires that some or all parameters be constrained to be equal across all groups. The alternative, when covariance or correlation matrices are not assumed to be equal across groups, is to analyze the subpopulations separately. The second option was judged to be more appropriate in this instance. To simplify comparisons of the group models, nonsignificant relationships were omitted from the resulting models shown in Figures 2 through 4. Significance was determined on the basis of obtained t-values that represent the ratio between the parameter estimate and its standard error.

The models shown represent the best fit for the data and the combination of domains that accounts for the most variance in global QOL. In no case, were more than five of the eleven domains examined found to be significant in the final models. This does not necessarily mean that there was no linear relationship between global QOL and the remaining domains when they were considered individually. Rather, as a result of the high intercorrelations between pairs of domains (such as neighborhood and residence or friends and leisure/recreation) the weaker domain in the pair is failing to make a unique contribution that is significant.

Examination of the models shows that quality of life is quite strongly related to organizational outcomes. Although such relationships have been generally accepted on the basis of experience and intuition, no previous research was uncovered showing a direct, statistical relationship between these organizational outcomes and the QOL construct. Relationships overall were stronger and more direct with respect to personal readiness and reenlistment intentions than with job performance. The weaker relationships involving job performance were attributed to measurement inadequacies in the performance variables.

While each of the group models is distinctive, several important commonalities were evident. None of the models supports a hypothesis of reciprocal causation between perceived domain QOL and global QOL. In other words, the relationship was always unidirectional. We can therefore conclude that how people evaluate the various domains of their lives is not a function of some pervasive view of life as a whole, but reflects a cognitive assessment of specific conditions.

A second finding of some importance, also consistent across groups, indicates that optimism played only a minor role in the determination of domain or global QOL. None of the models tested supported a link between optimism and domain QOL. A relatively weak relationship between optimism and global QOL was found for only the married with children group. This finding, coupled with the unidirectional relationship from domain QOL to global QOL, tends to refute the argument that perceptions of QOL are trait determined.

Practical measures of fit were used to judge the various models because, as is typical, the large sample sizes resulted in significant chi-square values. For each of the models, the degree of fit is therefore shown by: root mean square residual (RMR), standardized RMR, the

goodness of fit index (GFI), normed fit index (NFI), and non-normed fit index (NNFI).

### **QOL Model for Married Members with Children**

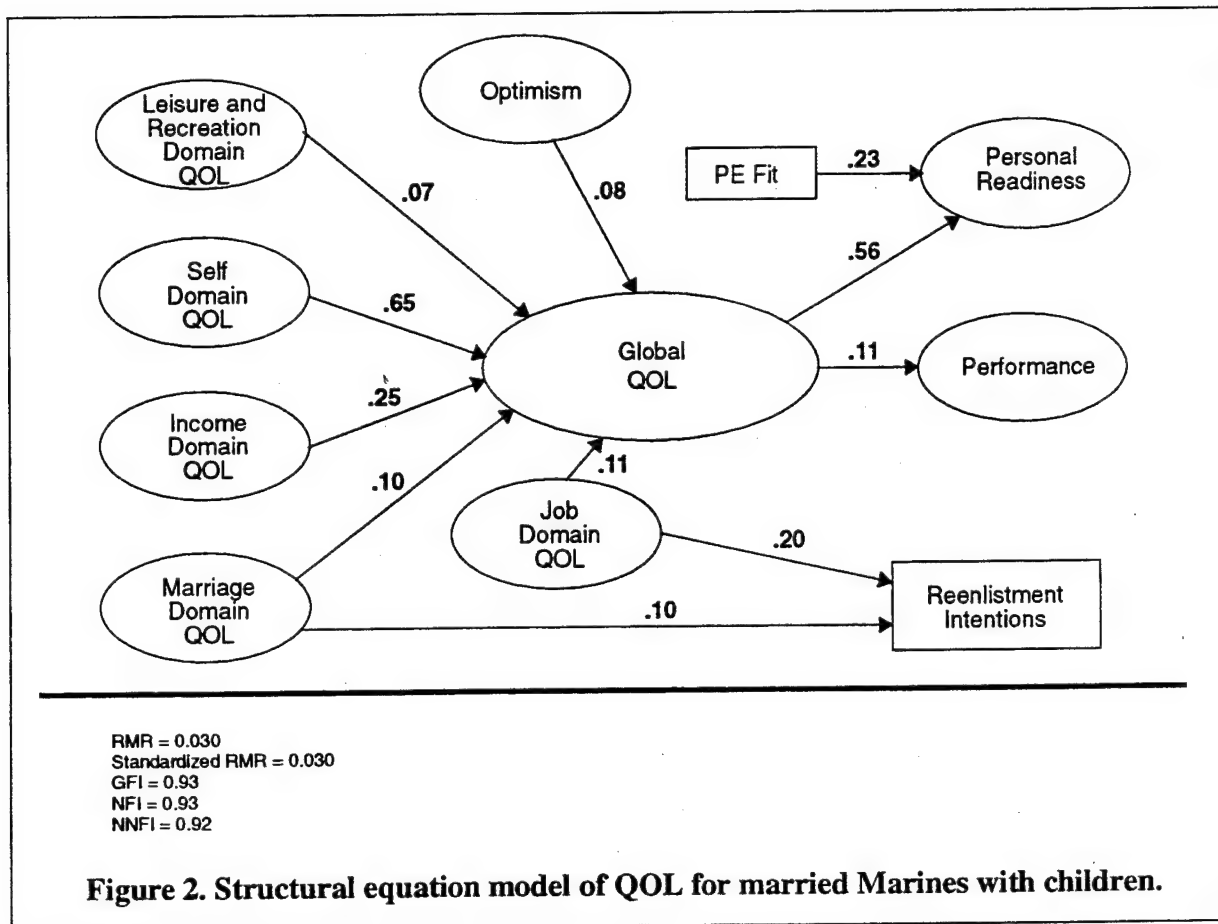
Figure 2 presents the structural equation model that resulted in the best fit to the data obtained from married members with children. For this group of respondents, global quality of life is determined by how they feel about their marriage, income, job, leisure, and self. Of these, by far the strongest relationship is with the self domain. A tendency to view the world optimistically also influenced their perceptions of life as a whole, but the relationship was not particularly strong. The domains shown in the model, together with optimism, accounted for 90 percent of the variance in global quality of life.

In this model, there was no direct relationship between global QOL and reenlistment intentions. However, perceptions of the marriage and job domains did affect reenlistment intentions. The relationship between marriage and reenlistment intentions is consistent with much prior military research (see Cavin, 1987; Morrison, Vernez, Grissmer, and McCarthy, 1989; Segal and Harris, 1993.) This model shows the latent variable of person-environment fit affecting personal readiness in conjunction with the relatively strong relationship between personal readiness and global QOL. Finally, a small but significant relationship leads from global QOL to performance.

### **QOL Model for Married Members without Children**

A different pattern of relationships was found to fit the data provided by married Marines who do not have children. For this group, perceptions of the self domain were not found to exert a significant effect on global QOL. The relationships linking the domains of job, leisure, marriage and income to global





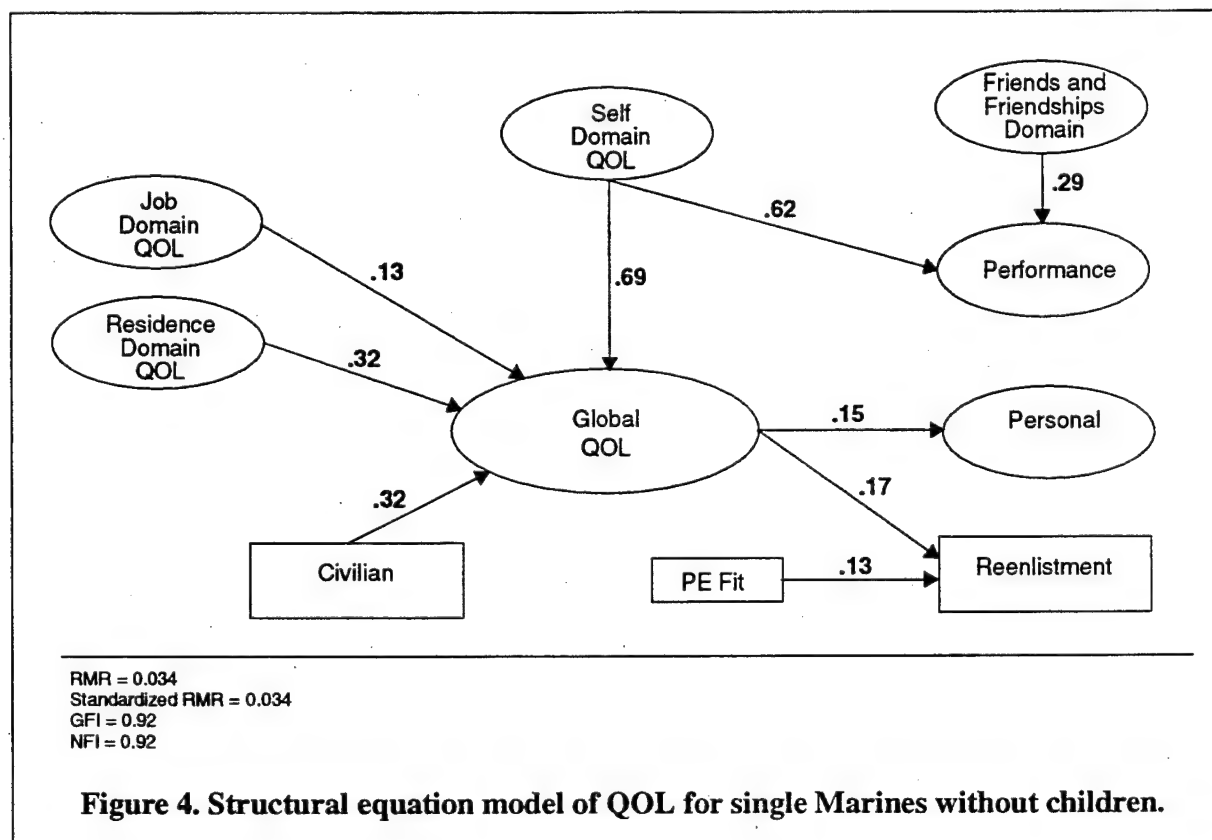
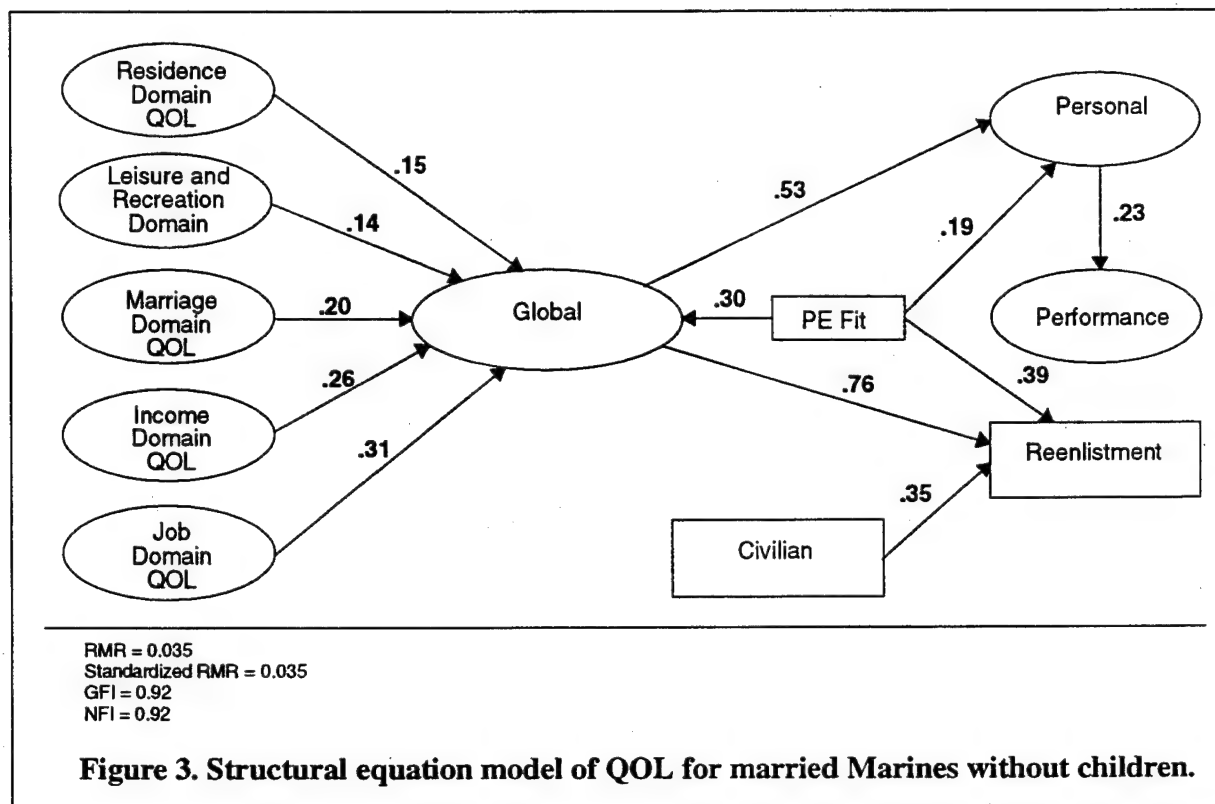
QOL were all somewhat stronger than those for the group with children. In addition, residence QOL was shown to have a direct effect on global QOL. The person-environment fit (P-E Fit) also contributed to global QOL for these members. The five life domains shown in the model in Figure 3, together with P-E Fit, accounted for 90 percent of the variance in global QOL.

The relationships of QOL with personal readiness and reenlistment intentions were sizeable and direct, and these two outcomes were also affected by P-E Fit. In addition, the reenlistment intentions of these respondents were influenced by perceptions of civilian alternatives to Marine Corps life. Overall, this model accounted for 45 percent of the variance in personal readiness and 55 percent of the variance in reenlistment intentions. However, there was no direct relationship between QOL

and performance, although performance and personal readiness were related.

#### QOL Model for Single Marines without Children

Figure 4 shows the model selected for the analysis group of single Marines without children, one of several that provided a relatively good fit for the data. In this model, only three of the life domains are shown to have a significant effect on global QOL. These were the residence, self, and job domains. Here, as with the group composed of Marines who were married and parents, the self domain was found to have the strongest effect on global QOL, with parameter estimates from the two analyses almost identical. For single Marines, a comparison of Marine Corps life with civilian alternatives was an additional influence on global QOL, rather than influencing intentions to reenlist directly. These four measures





accounted for 90 percent of the variance in global QOL.

Unmarried Marines without children tend to live in bachelor military housing. As previously discussed, these members frequently reported negative feelings and dissatisfaction with their residences. The fact that residence QOL leads to overall QOL does not contradict the more specific findings related in bachelor residences. What the model does suggest is that the few members of this group who are satisfied with their quarters are likely to experience higher global QOL.

For this group of Marines, a direct path from global QOL to personal readiness and reenlistment intentions was obtained. P-E Fit was also shown to influence reenlistment decisions with 59 percent of the variance in reenlistment intentions accounted for by global QOL and P-E Fit. Interestingly, the influence on the performance measure comes from QOL in two domains, rather than from the global measure, and together they account for 61 percent of the variance. As shown, the feelings about oneself and self development have almost as strong an effect on performance as on global life quality.

The friends domain--which was not an influence on global QOL--also has a direct effect on performance. As the initial analyses of this domain showed, most of the young single respondents said that their friends were Marines where they were stationed and it is likely that they were in the same unit. It is logical to believe that unit cohesion is an outcome of such friendships and, further, that unit cohesion improves performance.

It is worth noting that an alternative model for this group, with a slightly less adequate fit on the basis of variance accounted for in global QOL and the outcome measures, showed the leisure and recreation domain to be significant-

ly related to both global QOL and performance. The parameter estimate for the relationship between the leisure domain and performance was .26, very similar to the parameter estimate of .29 between the friends domain and performance.

### QOL of Single-Parent Marines

Only 180 respondents identified themselves as single parents with physical custody of their children. Because the number of valid cases in this subgroup was substantially reduced by missing responses, structural equation modeling was not an appropriate analysis technique and a multiple regression procedure was substituted.

The eleven measures of domain QOL, optimism, civilian comparison, and P-E Fit were tested as predictors of global quality of life for single parents. Results of this analysis are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3

#### Multiple Regression Predicting Global QOL for Single Parents

Variable	Multiple R	R <sup>2</sup>
QOL in self domain	.67	.45
QOL in income domain	.76	.58
Civilian alternatives	.80	.64
Optimism	.82	.67
QOL in intimate relationship	.83	.69
QOL in job domain	.84	.71

Using a stepwise procedure, a combination of six of these factors was found to account for a significant amount of the variance in global QOL. Life domain measures entering the equation were self, income, intimate relationship and job. The respondents' perceptions of civilian alternatives and their optimism scores also played a significant role.

## **Major Findings and Conclusions**

***Perceptions of QOL have behavioral consequences that affect the Marine Corps' ability to perform its mission.***

The above statement reflects the most significant finding from the QOL assessment. Although Marine Corps leaders and program planners have long suspected this to be true, for the first time statistical evidence is available to show that perceived QOL has real behavioral consequences. As a result, it can be shown that maintaining quality of life is not only the "right thing to do," but is also essential to organizational effectiveness.

***The causal relationship between domain QOL and global QOL is unidirectional, from domains to perceptions of life as a whole.***

This is particularly important to an understanding of how individuals evaluate their lives, because it shows that assessment of various domains depends more upon life events and conditions than upon a pervasive view of life held by an individual. Further evidence to support this conclusion is gained from the next conclusion, as well.

***The personality variable of optimism plays a relatively small part in perceptions of global QOL, and is not significant in the assessment of domain QOL.***

It should not be concluded that personality makes no contribution to perceptions of life, but rather that the role of personality is relatively minor for members of the Marine Corps as a whole. This is an important finding, because it increases the probability of successfully implementing change. For the most part, it is easier to change conditions than to change individuals.

***Domains of life that determine global QOL vary by marital and parental status.***

While this conclusion may seem obvious, it is an important point when developing strategies to improve QOL and for initiating actions grounded in research. Based on this type of information, specific demographic groups can be targeted and strategic planning can be modified as demographics of the Marine Corps change.

***Perceptions of the job domain significantly affect the global QOL of all demographic groups of Marines.***

Although jobs were not necessarily the strongest influence on global QOL, the job domain was the only domain that was a significant factor for both single Marines, married Marines without children, and married Marines with children. For members who were married but were not parents, the job was the most important factor in their QOL. The job domain is an area of life where changes can be made without major investments in programs.

***Other domains shown to have a significant impact on global QOL were residence, income/standard of living, leisure and recreation, and marriage/intimate relationship.***

Each of these four domains made a statistically significant contribution to global QOL for at least two of the three demographic analysis groups, and are therefore areas of life that merit particular attention. This does not necessarily mean that other domains had no influence on QOL, only that the effect was less strong. Additionally, when domains are highly correlated with each other (such as residence and neighborhood, or leisure and friends), the weaker one may be dropped from the model.

***Positive feelings about oneself, such as self-esteem and satisfaction with personal development, are essential to global QOL.***

*The majority of respondents had relatively high scores in the self domain of life. These positive perceptions were related to the idea of the Marine Corps as an elite group, and to satisfaction with training and personal development in the Marine Corps. Minority members were more positive about this domain than were the white majority.*

*The proportion of satisfied, happy-with-their-lives Marines to unsatisfied and unhappy members is approximately two to one.*

Junior enlisted Marines are most likely to have negative QOL scores, with approximately 43 percent in the E-2 to E-4 group expressing unhappiness with life as a whole. Senior officers and warrant officers were the most positive, but even among those groups negative perceptions of global life quality accounted for approximately 15 percent. These results indicate that Marine Corps members are more likely to express dissatisfaction and unhappiness with their lives than are comparable civilian samples.

*Structural equation modeling is a useful technique for making sense of the complex set of factors that affect Quality of Life.*

These statistical procedures have the advantages of being able to consider the effects of all factors simultaneously, and allow for the analysis of latent variables that are not measured directly. Equally important, they yield estimates of *true* relationships after error variance has been partialled out.

*Comprehensive QOL assessment advances conceptual understanding and provides directions for action.*

Low domain QOL scores are essentially problem statements that can provide valuable insight for decision makers. Coupled with demographic data, these domain assessments can

be used to suggest the most effective allocation of resources and to provide a roadmap for action.

## **Some Recommendations for Action**

Unmarried Marines, who are predominantly younger and in junior enlisted paygrades, are seriously dissatisfied with residences in bachelors' quarters. Not only are they very negative about their housing, this is also a domain which affects their global life quality. That is, it is both important to them and they tend to be negative in their evaluations. What is perhaps surprising is that attractiveness is the strongest predictor of overall satisfaction with their residence for this group of Marines. Other facets that predicted overall satisfaction with housing were comfort and privacy. The housing domain scores for this group were in marked contrast to those of Marines living in military family housing or civilian residences, where perceptions were generally positive.

**Recommendation:** On the basis of these data, funds available for housing should be used to improve bachelors' quarters, concentrating on attractiveness, comfort, and privacy considerations.

Friends and leisure activities are also of major importance to young single Marines. In the type of leisure activities they prefer, they are not unlike their civilian contemporaries--they like to "hang out" with their friends and they need a comfortable place to do so. The under-25 age group was more dissatisfied with their leisure activities than those who were older. In general, they are not particularly interested in such activities as golf, tennis, camping (they do enough of that on the job), or other organized activities. They do like to work out and frequently mentioned to the researchers that they would like better gym facilities. Listening to music and reading are activities in which they frequently engage.

**Recommendation:** On-base leisure facilities should be targeted to the single Marine living in bachelors' quarters, as married members and those residing in civilian housing are more likely to depend upon recreational facilities in the community. Given the preferences they expressed, the following are important: gyms, attractive places to meet and spend time with friends, the availability of libraries, clubs where they can meet friends and listen to music, and the availability of a good selection of books and tapes for sale in the Exchange.

From 60 to 65 percent of the respondents reported dining out frequently, regardless of marital status. Among those who did not dine out frequently, the reason given most often was that it was "too expensive" and this was especially true among married respondents.

**Recommendation:** Any additional restaurant facilities in the moderate to inexpensive category would be likely to find a ready clientele.

The data clearly indicate that a good personal relationship with a significant other (spouse or intimate partner) is associated with positive feelings about one's life. Conversely, it is just as clear that negative feelings about this facet of life have a negative impact on global well-being. Roughly 24 percent of the sample reported predominantly negative feelings about the marriages or personal relationships in which they were involved. However, we can infer that many of those who were not seriously involved wanted to be--47 percent of those respondents felt unhappy about the fact that they were not involved with a partner.

**Recommendation:** The Marine Corps Family Program should concentrate on proactive programs that help couples cope with the stresses that military life places on intimate

relationships and support groups for young Marine Corps spouses. Strategies should be developed for enrolling more Marines in premarital counseling programs.

Marines who get strong feelings of accomplishment from their jobs are also more satisfied with their jobs which is, in turn, related to positive assessments of life as a whole. They would like to have greater autonomy on their jobs, but they feel that the jobs they do are important. Members who said that the best thing about being a Marine was being "one of the few and the proud" and those who thought the best thing was opportunities for training were most likely to evaluate this aspect of life in a positive manner, and approximately 40 percent of the sample felt that their current job closely matched their ideal job on a number of dimensions.

**Recommendation:** Many characteristics of Marine Corps jobs are defined by the mission and would be difficult to modify to any great extent. However, leaders can reinforce the importance of the work and the uniqueness of the organization--aspects that make a significant difference in how members feel about their jobs.

Finally, there is the important issue of income and standard of living. While it would be simplistic to recommend an increase in military pay, a solution that is largely beyond the control of Marine Corps leaders, there may be alternatives available that will help Marine Corps families stretch their budgets. The perception of the majority of the sample was that the Exchange and Commissary system was failing to do that at this time.

In summary, the principal advantages of the approach taken in this research are that the information comes directly from the population affected, and that it examines multiple components of military life. Support for efforts of this type is growing because most government lead-

ers now agree that maintaining positive quality of life for military members and their families should be a national priority.

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## **Distribution List**

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